

WHAT'S LOVE* GOT TO DO WITH

BUILDING ARCHIVES

A NOTE ON COMMUNAL ARCHIVING

July 2024

What's Love* Got To Do With _____?

is a monthly series published on Project Theory Probe, discovering the many ways that love has been overlooked in our daily lives, then proposing solutions to our intimacy-deprived capitalist existence.

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BUILDING ARCHIVES

Written by Kitty.

Designed by Trixie and Kitty.

Annotated by you, _____.

Before turning to the next page:

**DRAW IN EACH BOX
WHAT (YOU THINK)
PEOPLE WOULD PUT
IN AN ARCHIVE.**

I have long been an archivist.

Though we rarely hear this word claimed in a personal, unprofessional context.

Its verb, *archiving*, was once reserved for established historians and experts, those who were enshrined inside establishments like The Government, The University, The Museum, The Library.

Photo: Visiting DOKK1
Aarhus Public Library
2022. Source: Kitty.



The faithful beliefs that

(1) archives need
to be told by those
in power, and

(2) they represent
history,

are legacies of the
colonial project.
Such a connotation
is maintained, but
to the benefit of
which people?

In the post-colonial worlds, archives are still widely defined as governmental or institutional documents about history and objective facts.

Kitty: The definition of each vocabulary is kept to benefit which people?

Archiving is a process of storing inactive information for the purpose of preservation across time. Every photo captured, diary line written, memento saved is a testimonial of a life and way of living.

By archiving, we are answering the following questions:

Whose story deserves to be told, remembered, and empathized with? Who will be silenced? Who gets to tell whose story? And in which tone of voice? Whose perspective gets preserved, embodied, materialized?

If creativity process offers (an)other discourse from the mainstream, the archiving process proposes (an)other memory framework. The construction of such framework is conscious, strategic, and always produces consequences. Then, through collective remembrances of a certain history, people build tribes, promote ideologies, commit to rituals, and most intimately, they design their ways of being (ontology). In short, constructing past worlds (memories, history) is building new worlds.

Dominique Luster: History is a series of strategically curated decisions that have the ability to either uplift some or silence others.

Photo: One super low-key, last-minute gathering to talk about “fusses”.

Source: Rem.



Anna Mariana: No matter how small the space, “invigorating” the archive, whether it is a verbal, text or other material archive, can eventually form a counter-discourse.

Beyond the choice of content and medium itself, the choice of creators (i.e. who is allowed to involve) also matters.

According to the status quo, the group of people that were invited to author Making A Fuss would be judged unappealing.

Why, they were **young** (not old), **amateur** (not experts), **Asian** (not White), **Vietnamese** **nationality** (not people of a “developed” nation nor Japanese, which is the dominant language of PTP*), **lower to middle class** (not rich), **nameless** (not celebrities), **okay-looking** (not exceptionally beautiful), **female** (not male).

When such accounts are reported, we offer “another” possibility of what deserves resources and empathy.

(*) Project Theory Probe: the explorative journal where this booklet is published.

Gathering is a way of archiving.

Methodologically, in gathering a certain people and engage in a process where stories arise organically from each participant, then piecing them together to **co-find meanings** (instead of dictating meanings), I propose a different framework to history making and history itself. From this small space, we will experiment with translating, disseminating, inviting, reflecting, and archiving other stories. By re-questioning **who gets to archive** (who gets to have their stories remembered) and **how to archive**, we are re-distributing power, and even better, reconstructing what power is.

CASE 2: RE-NARRATE THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT I INDONESIA

The women's right movement in Indonesia was usually narrated in accordance to Indonesian political periodization. This implied several things:

(1) the women's movement does not have its own historical periodization, (2) it is on the edge of the main narrative, (3) the women's struggles made no initiatives of their own.

In 2012, the Vredeburg Museum counter-narrated by revitalizing its archive. They hosted multi-media materials and used aesthetics to make archives more appealing, thus, accessible to the public.



Photo: The Women's and Youth Movement Corner at Vredeburg Museum 2012. Source: private.

Workshops were held to accumulate more diverse documentation about the movement and hold space for broader dialogues. This effort reclaimed the movement from existing historiography and deconstructed the narrative that the movement was mainly organized. Rather, it is “[...] to show the existence of an everyday women's movement, non-elite, even **organic** in its development in the broader community [...] an endeavor to produce **experience-based** knowledge in the Vredeburg Museum [...] and] that to obtain justice and gender equality, it will not merely be given, but must be struggled for.”

Since – or coincide with – the Ontological Turn of the 1990s, many efforts to decolonize and redefine the archive have taken place across the globe. We are seeing wider, queerer answers to the quest(ion),

who deserves empathy?

Mediums like blogging, vlogging, front cameras for selfies etc. also facilitate inclusive autonomy*.



(*) Although these platforms are still created by – and most benefiting – the colonial and dominant power.

I don't mean to imply no effort has been taken, or that redefining the archive and history-making is a new discussion*.

(*) Although such a discussion is not popular in non-academic, non-West settings...

My purpose is illustrating the fact that (1) the building of memories and history can be deconstructed by pointing to the fact that existing archives are biased, they don't represent the whole history, nor they need to be told by those with traditional power; (2) alternative narratives can be organically facilitated no matter how small the effort, and (3) such an activism is only possible through the practice of care, of looking deeply.

Recognizing that there are other histories, other ways of knowing and experiencing naturally compels us to hold space for and assist their existence. In short, recognizing catalyzes activism, and expanding our archives makes way for *ontological widening*.

Silvia Bleichmar: The otherness is not only the recognition of the ontological right of the existence of other, but also the duty / responsibility to provide the other with the means so that the other can perform their existence. The recognition of otherness does not only implicate that I recognize that there are others, who can exist, but that I recognize that I have to provide the means to help the others to exist.

References

Archives Have the Power to Boost Marginalized Voices by Dominique Luster

Collaboration, Dialogue, and Trust by Peter Berliner and Tina Enghoff.

Invigorating the Archive, Creating Discourse: The importance of archive for social movements by Anna Mariana.

In (conference) Jornadas sobre Diversidad Cultural by Silvia Bleichmar, 2014.

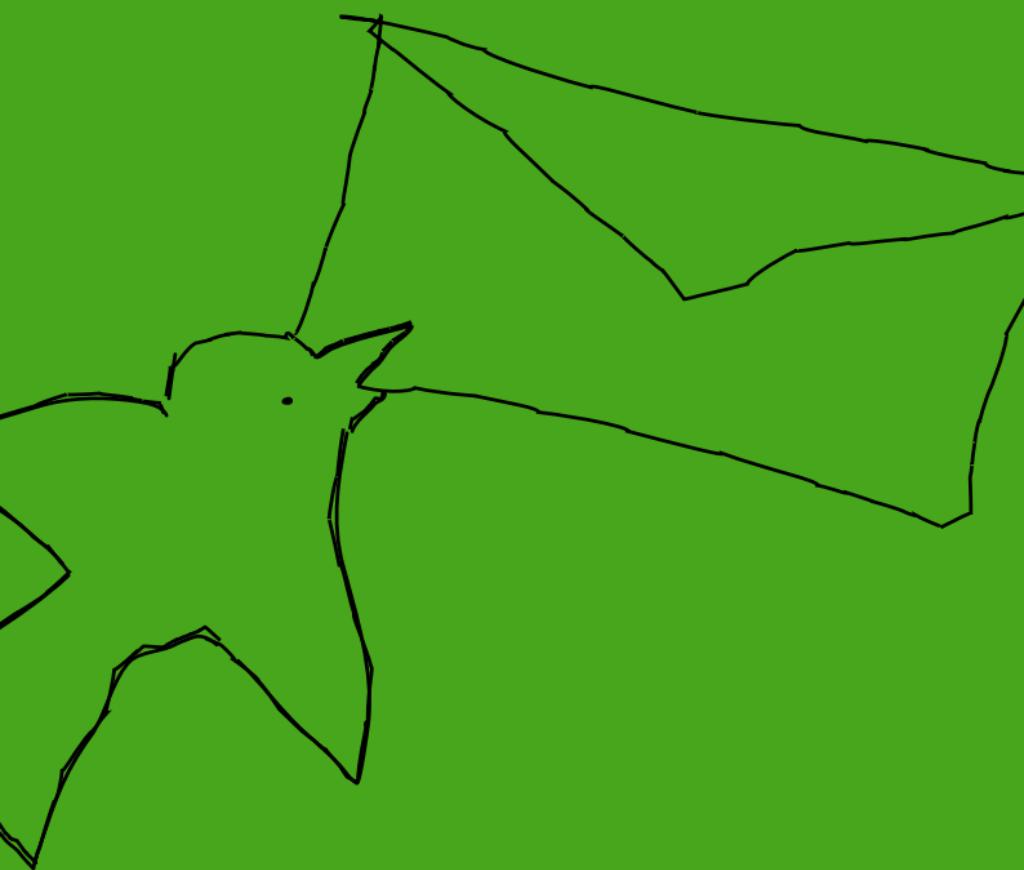
On Gathering by Mindy Seu.

What's Love* Got To Do With Making A Fuss by Kitty and friends.

When I call myself an archivist, I am pointing to my practice of capturing, collecting, and organizing data that are then preserved through the process of gathering people, creative storing, and disseminating ontologies. I strategically work with memory and history through its records. My point is to uplift some otherness.

CASE 1: RE-NARRATE FAMILY LIFE | VIETNAM

Making A Fuss, for example, is an archival effort for a marginalized people: Using personal stories (instead of empirical facts) in the process of a projection (instead of work) to offer a counter-narrative to what is usually narrated.



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